

A
CHALLENGE
TO THE
Dissenters:

Or, Several
PROPOSITIONS.

Relating to the NECESSITY of
Constant Communion

With the Establish'd

CHURCH of ENGLAND:

Wherein the *Objections* of the *Dissenters*
(Especially the *Presbyterians* and *Independents*)
are Obviated and Defeated.

TOGETHER WITH
A Serious Expostulation with them;
AND
A Just Appeal to their Consciences.

By One who was *Educated a Dissenter.*

EXON.

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To the R E A D E R.

THE Design of these few Pages, is not to entertain thee with new Idea's or airy Speculations, but with OLD SUBSTANTIAL TRUTHS; and to contract the Controversy between the Church of England and the Dissenters into so narrow a Compass, that the Poor, the Busy, and the Weakest Sons of the Church may, at a small Expence of Money and Time, be furnished with that ARMOUR of PROOF, whereby they may be able to defend themselves, and defeat their most daring and subtil Antagonists: For which End, I have reduced it to certain Propositions, which are either Self-evident; or, being join'd with others, are so clear and convincing, that 'tis impossible for an impartial and unprejudic'd Mind to resist the sweet Violence of their United Rays; and are so exactly linked together, that a Stoick might as easily break the fatal Series of Causes, as a truly conscientious and reasoning Christian this Chain of Ecclesiastick Thoughts: Which obliges us to perform all those Duties which our Relation and Circumstances (as Members of a Christian Society under an English Government) exact from us: To contribute what we can in Religion (as every thing in Nature does) to the Harmony of the Sphere wherein Heaven has placed us: Which consists in mutual Offices and Endearments, and a just Uniformity in Worship and Obedience: Which obliges us to secure the Tranquility of the State, by preserving the Unity (the Strength and Beauty) of the Church: Which is the firmest Support of Monarchy, and the strongest Bulwark against Popery, Socinianism, Atheism and Immorality; and, in a Word, the Glory and Security of Great Britain. May these Propositions be a Means, either of convincing thee of thine Error, or confirming thee in the Truth; for which Purpose, I have pursued the natural, easy and familiar Method of a sincere Lover of it; not the scholastick Measures of a wrangling Pedant. May these fix the fluctuating Occasional Conformist, and convert the Mercenary Hypocrite, a Votary of Mammon, into a true Disciple of the Self-denying Jesus. May these, finally, inflame all careless and lukewarm Members, with a vigilant and generous Zeal for the Doctrine and Worship, Honour and Interest, of the Best of Churches. Which is the hearty Prayer of

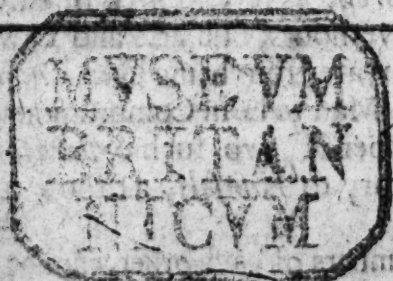
E. G.

NONE; who was so unhappy as to be Educated by the Dissenters, and since, infected with the spreading Principles of Socinianism; which, with little Reluctancy, he entertained; by the Impression whereof, he gradually sunk into the very Dregs of Deism; which had strong and venomous Influence on the Conduct of his Life. And, indeed this is an easy Descent; every Remove from the Church of England being

To the Reader.

(as sad and daily Experience shews us) a declining Step towards Heresy; and that towards a total Extirpation of Reveal'd Religion: Which is the Grand Design (under various Colours) of a Potent and Politick Republican Party of this divided and degenerate Kingdom: Whose Unhallowed and Antimonarchical Measures, the several Sects of Schismatics (whose seditious Separation they Patronize) do either wilfully or blindly pursue.

One, who has for sometime been an Unworthy Member of the most Orthodox and Soundest, Best Govern'd and Disciplin'd Body of Christians in the World: Who frankly confesses, That, by the Sallies of wild extravagant Fancy, and an irregular Conversation, he has tarnish'd the Reputation and lessen'd the Credit of this Divine Society; the Ignorant and Malicious being apt to charge the whole Body with the Failures of particular Members. Wherefore, reflecting, with a just Regret and Sorrow, on his past Errors in Principle and Practice; he is resolved, by the Grace of God, to endeavour a Retrieval; by subjecting his Reason for the future, to the bright Authentick Revelations of the Infallible Spirit, and his Fancy and Passions to the Empire and Guidance of both. And thinks himself indispensably oblig'd, by the Laws of Nature and Christianity, to embrace all Opportunities of exerting the small Talent Heaven has indulg'd him, in vindicating the Honour and advancing the Interest of his Offended Mother; whose Pardon, with the profoundest Humility, he implores; and solemnly declares, That, by the concurrent Influence of the Divine Spirit, he will employ his future Minutes in making all possible Amends for his former Deviations from the Excellent Rules she has prescribed us. And being mov'd with a Deep Concern and Christian Zeal, for the Security and Peace of his dear native Country, as well as the Reform'd Religion in it, has, without any mercenary Regard, published these Propositions; in order to convince those that are so unhappily Educated and Mised, of the Malignity and fatal Tendency of such Schismatick and Heretical Principles, which threaten the Dissolution both of Church and State. And he earnestly beseeches them to read these Pages, without any Respect to the Author; lest Prejudice against his Person should elude the Force, and defeat the Design, of the Undertaking. And, indeed, none but Men of shallow Capacities, will reject a wholesome Remedy, because a sick Physician prescrib'd it. Vale.



A 2

Several

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Several PROPOSITIONS, relating to the *Necessity*
of *Constant Communion* with the Establish'd CHURCH of
ENGLAND: Wherein, The *Objections* of the DIS-
SENTERS (especially the *Presbyterians* and *Independ-*
ents) are Obviated and Defeated.

[1] **T**HE Christian Church is a BODY or SOCIETY of Men, se-
parated by Jesus Christ (their HEAD from the Rest of the
World; and united to the *Sacred Trinity*, and to Them-
selves, by *One Divine Evangelical Covenant*.

[2] That the Church being founded on *One Covenant*, though divid-
ed for Man's Conveniency into *Several Congregational Parts*, is but *One*
all Christendom over.

[3] That to be in *Communion* with it, is to be a *Member* of it: *Pray-*
ing, Hearing and Receiving the Sacraments together, not being in a
strict *Seple Communion*, but an *Exercise* of it. And,

[4] Consequently; That none but *Members* are capable of perform-
ing *Acts of Communion*.

[5] That by *Baptism* we are admitted into this *Covenant*, and made
Visible Members of the *Universal Church*.

[6] By being *Members*, we are entitled to all the *Priviledges*, and
obliged to perform all the *Offices* of Church-Society, viz. to obey the
Church's Authority, joyn Prayers, &c.

[7] That all *true Churches* are *Members* of each other, tho' each has a
peculiar Jurisdiction; and every *Act of Communion* an *Act of Commu-*
nion with the Whole Catholick Church, tho' performed in a *particular*
Congregation.

[8] That distinct *Congregations of Foreigners* and the Church within
whose *Jurisdiction* they live, and whose *Communion* they own, are *Mem-*
bers of each other, though they observe the *Rules and Customs* of the
Churches to which they originally belong. But,

[9] 'Tis impossible for *Seperate Assemblies* held in the same Kingdom,
under distinct kinds of Government and different Governours, to be *Mem-*
bers of each other; who condemn the Constitution and Forms of Wor-
ship, renounce the *Communion*, and endeavour the Subversion of each
other; and are so far from being *One Church*, as several sorts of Govern-
ment in the same Nation, with distinct Governours, Subjects and Laws, at
perpetual Enmity and War with each other, are from being *One Kingdom*.

[10] That 'tis likewise impossible for a Man to be in *Communion* with,
or (which is the same thing) to be a *Member* of two such *Seperate* and
Opposite Societies, without being as contrary to *Himself*, as those *Chur-*
ches are to each other.

[11] That two Churches not being *Members* of each other, cannot par-
take in the same *Covenant* (which is the *Divine Charter* whereon the
Church is founded) but the *Divider* forfeits his Interest in it. [12]

[12] That all the *Blessings* of the Covenant are convey'd to us by *actual* Communion with the Church.

[13] That the Church being divided into several Parts, and every particular Church having its Limits, as every Member of the Body its proper Place, and every baptiz'd Person a *visible* and *fixt* Member of the Church, and every Member *constantly* obliged to perform Acts of *visible* Communion, whereby the Blessings of the Covenant are convey'd; 'tis the indispensable Duty and true Interest of every Christian *actually* and *constantly* to communicate with the Establish'd Church wherein he lives, provided it be so *orthodox* and *sound*, that he may *lawfully* live in Communion with it.

[14] That is an *orthodox* and *sound* Part of the *Catholick* Church, which requires nothing *sinful*, as a Condition of its Communion.

[15] That if any thing less than *sinful* Terms of Communion might justify our *Seperation* from the Establish'd Church, *Divisions* would be *infinite*, and Men might new-model Churches, as often as their Fancies alter.

[16] That the *Withdrawing* ourselves from Ordinary Communion with such a Church, wherein we live, into *seperate Societies*, is *SCHISM* from the Universal Church, the Communion of the Church being but *one*.

[17] That *Schism* (which the *Apostles* and all the *antient Christians* have represented in the *blackest Colours*) is a SIN of so *heinous* a Nature, that 'tis as *fatal* to the Souls of Men, as *Adultery* or *Murther*.

[18] That the Establish'd Church of *England* is such an *orthodox* and *sound* Part of the *Catholick* Church, has been acknowledg'd by the most *Eminent* and sober *Non-conformists*, whereof I could give a Volume of Testimonies, and is confirmed by most *Dissenters* *Occasional Communion* with it.

[19] That a *Perswasion*, that Communion with the Church of *England* is *unlawful*, when indeed 'tis not so, will no more justify a *Seperation* from it, than *St. Paul's* *erronious* Conscience his violent Persecution of the *Christians*; upon which Account he styles himself the *greatest* of *Sinners*.

[20] That the *Moral* Goodness or Evil of Actions is not to be measured by Mens *Opinions* concerning 'em, but by the natural and revealed Law of God, which is the *Rule of Conscience*.

[21] That no Man can plead *Conscience* for his *Seperation* from the Church of *England*, unless he be perswaded, That he cannot join in Communion with it, without transgressing the Law of God in so doing.

[22] That whatsoever is expressly commanded, or forbidden, by the natural or revealed Law of God, or by direct Inference or Parity of Reason, is a *Duty* or a *Sin*; and that which is neither so commanded or forbidden is *indifferent*; and we may do it, or omit it, with a safe Conscience.

[23] 'Tis a Dictate of the Law of Nature to obey Governours in every thing that is *just* and *honest*; without which, every State, City and Family would quickly disband, and crumble into Confusion: And God has expressly commanded us in Scripture, to obey them that have the Rule over us, and to be subject to the higher Powers; not only for *Wrath*, but also for *Conscience* Sake, Rom. 13. 5.

[24]

[24] That, in a *secondary Sense*, Human Laws are a Part of the *Rule of Conscience*, by Virtue of, and in Subordination to, the Laws of God; we being bound in Conscience to yield Obedience to the Laws of Men that are not inconsistent with the Laws of God; because, therein we obey his express Command: So that, tho' the *Matter* of the Command be indifferent, yet *Obedience* to it is *absolutely necessary*.

[25] That all Men being bound to obey the Laws of Men, that are not repugnant to the Laws of God, they are consequently obliged so to do in *Ecclesiastick Affairs*; unless it can be evinced (which can never be done) That God has forbidden Men to enact Laws relating to *Religious Matters*.

[26] That a Divine Law, cloathed with Circumstances of Human Appointment, creates a much stronger Obligation than a Law of Man, that enjoins a Thing perfectly *indifferent*: In that, we obeying, because tis God's *own Law*; in this, obeying Men, because God has obliged us in *general* to obey our Superiours.

[27] That every Man is obliged by the Law of *Nature* to contribute what he can to the Tranquility of the *Community*, whereof he is a Member; and consequently to *conform* to the Orders and Customs of the Established Church, as far as he lawfully may; the Interest of Church and State being so interwoven in our *British Constitution*, that *Schism* in the one does necessarily imbroid the *other*.

[28] That every Christian is indispensably bound by the Laws of *Jesus Christ*, and the Nature of his Religion, to preserve, as much as in him lies, the *Unity* of the Church; which consists not only in professing the *same Faith*, but joining together in the Solemnities of the *same Worship*. And tho' Human Laws prescribe particular Circumstances and Forms of Worship, yet he that violates the Unity of the National Church, does really transgress the Laws of *Nature* and of *Christ*, as well as of *Man*; nay, is guilty of *Schism*, tho' by reason of an *Indulgence*, granted to *scrupulous Consciences*, he is not accountable to Man for his *Seperation* from the Established Church.

[29] That tis very apparent, that the *Dissenters* never did, as much as in them lay, towards the *Unity* of the Church, and the *Peace* of the Kingdom; (*i. e.*) They never contributed to the Welfare and Tranquility of the State, by the *highest Degree* of Conformity to the Established Church; which their own *Consciences* might safely dispense withal; whose Divisions in *Externals* do naturally tend to dissolve the *Unity* of Charity and Affection; which must necessarily terminate in Confusion, Tumult and Ruine.

[30] That it is almost impossible to imagine, that any Man professing Christianity should be truly *tender* and *scrupulous* in Things of an *indifferent* Nature, and *confident* and *careless* in the Violation of a Duty *necessary* and *essential* to the Life and Being of *Christianity*, and a *Christian Church* and Kingdom.

[31] That a Refusal to comply with Things *indifferent*, because enjoined by lawful Authority, is an Argument of an obstinate and rebellious Spirit, and not of a tender and scrupulous Conscience.

[32] That our *Saviour* himself did use *indifferent* Things, that were not prescribed in Divine Worship: Thus he joined in the *Synagoga*l Worship, tho' the Manner of it was not so much as hinted at; and used the Cup of Charity in the *Passover*; and vouchsafed to be present at the *Feast of Dedication*; which were human Institutions; nay, comply'd with the *Jews* in the very Posture of the *Passover*, which they changed to *sitting*, tho' God hath prescribed *standing*.

[33] The *Dissenters*, who condemn the Use of such Things as are not commanded by God, do in their Practice confute their own Opinion: Seeing they are no where commanded to sprinkle the Children that are baptized; to receive the Lords-Supper *sitting*; to touch or kiss the Book in Swearing, or to enter into a particular *Church-Covenant*, &c.

[34] That tis impossible to frame an *Idea* of a Church, without certain *Rites* and *Ceremonies* in it.

[35] That for these, there is no particular and definitive Rule in Scripture; which is evident from those *general Rules* relating to this Matter, *Let all things be done to Edification*; and, *let all things be done in Decency and in Order*, 1 Cor. 14. 26. 40. Which would be altogether needless, if *all Particulars* were fixed and determined accordingly.

[36] That as no Churches are without their *Rites* and *Ceremonies*, so every Church assumes an Authority to fix and determine these; and indeed, not only those of the *Ausburgh Confession*, but *Calvin* and his Followers, nay, *Andrew Melvil* himself, in his *Platform of Presbytery for the Church of Scotland*, expressly declares, That it belongs to the Church to determine all Matters relating to *Decency* and *Order* in the *Circumstantials* of Divine Worship.

[37] That the *Ceremonies* of our Church are neither *indecent* nor *burthensome* for their Number, cannot be deny'd; nor *Idolatrous* or *Superstitious*, (which are the Three Things for which *Rites* and *Ceremonies* can be justly condemned) our Church entertaining no Opinion that has the *least Tincture* of *Idolatry* or *Superstition*; but hath many *Doctrines*, nay, all necessary, to impugn and overthrow both: and tis impossible to form a Notion of *Idolatry* or *Superstition* in *Practice*, without an *idolatrous* or *superstitious Opinion* to found it upon.

[38] That a Man may *conscientiously* do what God has not commanded, out of Obedience to *Governours*, for *external Order* and *Decency*, without a *superstitious Thought* of flattering God with it, or placing any *Religion* in it: But tis impossible for a Man *conscientiously* to abstain from what God has not forbidden, and is by lawful Authority enjoined, but he must think to *please God* by such a Refusal; in which *Fond Conceit*, of pleasing and humouring God by Things of an *Indifferent Nature*, consists the *True Spirit* of *Superstition*.

[39] That our Church declares, That it builds the Injunction and Use of its few *Ceremonies* on no other Foundation than the *General Rules* of *St. Paul*, that they tend to *Decency*, *Order* and *Edification*.

[40] That our *Governours* (to whom surely we may rationally allow as much Light, Prudence and spiritual Assistance, as to a few *fanatical* and *discontented Subjects*) are the *fittest Judges* of the *Tendency* of *Circumstantials* to *Decency*, *Order* and *Edification*.

[41] That it is most Just and Reasonable, that we should pay that Deference to the *Judgment* of our *Superiors* (whose Business it is to *consult* and *command* for the best) as to be guided by them in *Doubtful Cases*; as we expect our *Children* and *Servants* should be by us; without which Submission, the Publick Happiness can't possibly be secured, nor Eternal Confusions prevented; there being no Indifferent Thing, but some Person or other may *doubt* of the *Lawfulness* of it.

[42] That tho' the Apostle says, *Rom. 14. 23. He that doubteth is damn'd (i. e. condemn'd by his Conscience) if he eat, because he eateth not of Faith*; for *whatsoever is not of Faith, is Sin*: Yet it does not follow, that a Man sins in Obeying Authority, where he doubts of the *Lawfulness* of the *Command*; there being a vast *Disparity* in the Cases; since the Man St. Paul speaks of was at liberty to forbear eating, and sinned in chusing to run a *needless Hazard* of transgressing the Divine Laws: But when a *Lawful Governour* commands, a Man ceases to be at Liberty. In the former Case, a Man might forbear without any Danger; but in the latter, there is *greater Hazard* in forbearing, than in *acting*; and consequently obliged to act in the *latter Case*, tho' it might be a *Sin* to act in the *former*. * But if the Authority of *Superiors* alone should not have Weight enough to turn the Ballance, yet the *Important Considerations*, which you'll find in the 47th Proposition, are sufficient to *Over-Rule* the *Doubt*, and to prevail with every Good and Wise Man, to *Conform* to the Orders of our Church.

[43] That the *wisest Dissenters* themselves will not deny, but that a *Church-Man* may be a *good Christian* and be saved, who follows the Conduct of his *Superiors* in *doubtful Cases*, tho' he may not be capable of defending the *Ceremonies* of our Church: But tis a Truth universally acknowledged, That he that seperates upon the Account of 'em, is bound at the *Peril* of his *own Salvation*, to embrace all Opportunities, and use his *best Endeavours*, to inform and satisfy himself about them.

[44] That common Experience tells us, That the Generality of those that seperate from our Church, never examined and weighed the *Constitution* of our Church, which they forsake, or of that to which they betake themselves: And though they seperate upon a pretended Dislike of our Rites, yet never considered the Nature of *Things Indifferent*, or of *Christian Liberty*, or of the *Power* of ever particular Church in establishing the *Circumstantials* of Divine Worship; Nay, that do no more understand either, at this Day, than I do the Laws and Interests of *China* and *Japan*; and which is worse, never endeavour it; but wilfully resist and shun all Means and Attempts of their Information, and are provoked and exasperated by our zealous Endeavours to convince them of their

* Here I argue with the Dissenters on their own Principles, supposing that St. Paul speaks of a Doubting Person; whereas he speaks here of One that is persuaded; which is evident from the 14th Verse of this Chapter, But to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. As for the Word *διζωνωμεν*, it does as properly signify, he that maketh a Difference, as, he that Doubteth; and so indeed it ought to have been translated, as we have it in the Margin of our Bibles.

their Error, tho' manag'd with the Spirit of *Meekness* and *Integrity*: Nay, it does not appear, that they much consult their *own Teachers* in this Affair; the most eminent whereof have declar'd, That a *Lay-Person* may lawfully join with us in all things; and are ready, upon *Occasion*, to conform in all the Instances of *Lay-Communion*.

[45] That in *Doubtful Cases*, (the Nature of Things being duly consider'd and examin'd by us) *That side* is to be *chosen*, which appears most *safe* and *reasonable*; that is, *That* which is freeſt from the greateſt *Dangers* and *Inconveniencies*, and *beſt* ſerves all the ſpiritual and temporal Interests, that a wiſe and good Man can propoſe.

[46] That ſince the Uſages of our *Church*, which the *Dissenters* ſcruple, are not *directly* forbidden by *God*, and if they are prohibited by *Inferences* drawn from expreſs Commands; theſe are ſo *obſcure*, that tho' they have been ſo many hundred Years in the *Chriſtian Church*, they were never condemn'd as *unlawful* till of late; and even now, theſe *Conſequences* are not discern'd by our *Superiors*; no, not by the *wiſeſt* and *beſt* Divines of all Perſwaſions in the World; who acknowledge our Injunctions to be *Innocent* at leaſt, if not *Apoſtolical*: So that if they are all miſtaken, it can be but a *Sin of Ignorance* at moſt, in thoſe of *meaner Capacities*, where ſo many of the *beſt Guides* are miſtaken.

[47] That if our Governours ſhould be *in the right*, and our Communion *lawful*; then the *Dissenters* are guilty of a *Sin* of the moſt *flagrant Nature*, in violating the *Laws of Church-Unity*, which are as plain and obvious as any in the ſacred Pages; and that, *in ſuch Inſtances*, where the whole *Catholick Church* of old, and the greateſt and beſt Part of the preſent Church, are of a different *Perſwaſion* from them; who forſake the Communion of ſuch a *Sound* and *Orthodox Church* of Jeſus Chriſt, and ſet up a *diſtinct Altar* in oppoſition to it; whereby they contemn the *Publick Worſhip* of Almighty God, and paſs a ſevere Sentence upon all the *true Sons* of the Church; whoſe *Doctrines* and *Worſhip* have been ſealed with the *Blood* of ſo many *Martyrs*; and deprive themſelves of the ordinary *Means of Salvation*, diſpens'd by thoſe that are *duly authoriz'd* and *commiſſion'd* for that purpoſe; whereby they keep up thoſe *Discords* and *Animosities* among us, which have given birth to all thoſe *Calamities* which this unhappy Nation has of late groan'd under, and ſeem to threaten more; which enervate our *Conſtitution*, and expoſe us as a *Prey* to a *Common Enemy*; which have hinder'd the *Conversion* of many *Roman Catholics* to the *pure Worſhip of God*, as the *Inteſtine Broils* and *Quarrels* among *Chriſtians* in general have that of *Turks, Jews* and *Heathens*, to *Chriſtianity*; which have harden'd the *Worſt* of *Sects* in their *Opinions*, and open'd one Door to *Popery*, and another to *Sceptiſm, Atheiſm* and *Immorality*; whereby they *Aſſront* their Governours, which is far worſe than *Offending* a *Weak Brother*; give *Scandal* to all peaceable Perſons, and offer a *Fair Pretence* to Men of a *Faction* and *Turbulent Temper*, to combine againſt the *Beſt* of *Governments*; and conſequently, take the moſt effectual Courſe to ruin the *Reform'd Religion* in this Kingdom.

[48] That ſeeing no Doubt about the *Lawfulneſs* of our *Communion*, nor the *higheſt Probability* of the Doubt, can poſſibly *Ballance* againſt ſuch

such a Sin, and such Consequences ; much less can *Personal Corruptions* ; or the *empty Pretence* of *better Edification* do it.

[49] That this *Exception* and *Pretence* will serve the *Turn* to justify a *Seperation*, not only from Ours, but Any Church in *Chriffendom* ; there being no *visible Church* without *corrupt Members* : And the Pretence of *better Edification*, will never be admitted to be of any Weight or Force, 'till it be made appear, that 'tis no matter whether a Man be of the *Establish'd Church*, or *Presbyterian*, or *Independent*, or *Anabaptist*, or *Antinomian*, or *Socinian*, or *Quaker* ; each whereof laying claim to this Pretence, with as much Heat as any of the rest, which will continue as long as the Abilities of the Ministers, and the Dispositions of People, are *different* and *various*. And sad Experience tells us, that the Pretences of *seeking for a purer Church*, (either in respect of its *Members* or *Ordinances*, or both) and a *more Edifying Ministry*, have carry'd many thro' a Succession or Descent of *Sects*, 'till at last they are left in the *Dregs* and *Lees* of *All Sects*, or center in the *Communion* of the *Romish Church*, or *Athiestically* shake Hands with *every thing* that has the *Face* or *Shadow* of *Religion* among us.

[50] That our Church does as *severely* condemn *Vicious* and *Immoral Practices*, as any Church in the World ; and would *more* severely chastize Offenders, if our *Causeless Divisions* had not check'd and hinder'd the Discharge of our *Discipline* upon 'em. And whoever reads the *Rubrick* and *Canons* of our Church, relating to the *Admission* of Persons to, or *Rejection* from, the *Sacrament*, must, if he be not obstinately prejudic'd, confess, That our Church is so far from approving *Vice* and *Impiety* in its Members, that it has taken all the Care that can reasonably be desired, to *purge* our *Communion* of *All Things* that may give just *Occasion* of *Offence* to *Any*.

[51] That the *Sins* of *corrupt* and *scandalous* Members, cannot possibly poison or defile those Persons that are not *accessary* to 'em, no more than *Judas* could infect our *Saviour* and his *Apostles* at the *Passover* : The *Good* and the *Bad* communicating not in *Sin*, but in a *common Duty*.

[52] That our *Saviour* did, by his *Example* and *Precept*, discountenance and forbid a *Seperation* from the *Jewish Church*, upon this Account, who did not seperate from it, tho' the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* (who then sat at the Helm in *Ecclesiastick Matters*) were *blind Guides* and *Hypocrites* ; who *perverted* the *Law*, *corrupted* the *Worship* of *God*, *devoured* *Widows Houses*, &c. *Mat. 15.* And yet, says he, they sit in *Moses Seat* : All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do, *Mat. 23. 2, 3.*

[53] That 'tis the *Apostles express Command* to hold *Communion* with the Church of *Corinth*, notwithstanding the many *Great Immoralities* that were among the *Members* of it, (*1 Cor. 33. & 51. & 11. 18.*) As *Contention*, *Strife*, *Envy*, *Fornication* and *Incest*, eating at the *Idols Table*, and coming not so soberly as became 'em to the *Table of the Lord*.

[54] That as to *Edification*, we have all things requisite in our *Constitution*, to the *building us up* in our *Most Holy Faith* ; and our *Clergy* do, with a becoming *Vehemence*, press All those Duties upon their *Auditors* which are necessary to their *Happiness* in this and the other World.

[55] That

[55] That we've just Reason to suspect, that the *Edification* that cannot be promoted in such a Communion, is not derived from the *Spirit and Gospel of Christ*; but depends upon Personal Abilities, Acquired Forms, or the Inventions and Passions of Men.

[56] That nothing is more common, than for the *Opinions of Parties*, a particular *Set of Words*, *Hypochondriack Whimfies*, *Nice Notions*, and *Lusciuous Fancies*, to pass for *Gospel Essential Truths*: And *Sudden Heats*, a *Loud Voice*, an *Impetuous Flow of Words*, and a *Melting Tone*, instead of *Sound and Solid Reasoning*, to pass for *Means of a Better Edification*, among the *Thoughtless, Inconstant and Giddy Multitude*; who for Want of Ballast are easily tosd about with every Wind of Doctrine.

[57] That if we consider *Edification*, or Building up, as apply'd to the *Whole Church*, as the *House or Temple of God*, 'tis a Contradiction in Terms to say, That the Temple of God is built up by dividing and separating the Parts of it from each other; and if we consider it as applied to *Particular Christians*, and importing their Growth in Grace, and Improvement in Virtue, in the *Unity of the Church*, under the *Influence of the Divine Spirit*, which in a *peculiar manner* resides in this Temple, shedding abroad its Graces in it, and animates this Body of Christ; surely then, to *separate* from the *Common Building*, and to *cut off* our selves from the *Unity of the Body of Christ*, is no likely way to *Edification*.

[58] Lastly, seeing the *Dissenters* separate from an Orthodox and Sound Part of the Catholick Church, Establish'd by Lawful Authority, upon a pretended Dislike of its Ceremonies, or Things not forbidden by God, which they conscientiously Abstain from, we must necessarily conclude, That the *Dissenters* from the Church of *England* are Guilty of *Schism, Disobedience and Superstition*.

A Serious Expostulation with the Dissenters; And, A Just Appeal to their Consciences.

AN.D now I cannot but reasonably imagine, that by this time you are throughly convinc'd of your *Error*; unless you are *steel'd* against Argument, and *impregnable* to Demonstration; unless you are *Blinded* by Passion, *Perverted* by Prejudice, or *Corrupted* by Secular Interest; which clap a *False Byass* on the Understanding, and carry it off from TRUTH. And indeed, all those that have Travell'd to restore you to the *Unity of the Church*, find it a more difficult Task to encounter your *Passions and Prejudices*, than your *Reasons*; which, God knows, are like the HOPE of a HYPOCRITE, or a *Spider's Web*, which is miserably thin and weak. If you are not yet convinc'd, I beseech you to read o'er the *Propositions* again, with that Application of Mind the Weight of the Affair deserves; and with that meek, lowly and peaceable Temper, which becomes every Christian that is *willing to be Inform'd*; which, I am sensible, is more than One-half of your Information. Methinks you should not close your Eyes, 'till you had satisfied your selves in a Matter of such *Vast Importance*, as concerns the *Glory of God*, the *Security of Religion*, the *Peace of the Community*, and your own *Eternal Happiness*. If your Consciences are so *tender and scrupulous*, as you pretend they are, you would embrace all Opportunities, and use your best

Endeavours, to Inform and Resolve them; and gladly kiss the Hand that brings you the Tidings of Peace, and offers you any Light to rectify your Judgments, and disperse your Scruples; and at once restore you to the Bosom of the Church, and the Tranquility of your Own. Nay, you would seek for Satisfaction with the same Concern and Diligence, as a Man dangerously Ill for a Remedy. And indeed, a scrupulous Conscience is as certain a Sign of a sickly Temper of Mind, proceeding from wrong Idea's of God and Religion, from Prejudice and predominant Melancholly; as the Squeamishness of the Stomach, which Salutary Food offends, is a Symptom of an unsound and distemper'd Body. But alas! The Indications are quite different in most of you, and create a just Suspicion, that your Conscience is nothing but Humour and Design, and your Scruples mere Shams and Politick Pretences; who wilfully shut your Minds against the brightest Evidence, and reject the Means of your Recovery; who industriously seek for Scruples in our Liturgy, and strain every thing, in order to form an Objection against it: Who read all our Discourses on this Subject with a captious Air and Design, and not with that Disposition of Mind, which becomes every Christian that is truly desirous to know what the good and acceptable Will of God is, in order to conform his Actions to it. But however, seeing, Christian, thou pretendest to act out of Conscience, I may justly appeal to it, and demand an Answer to the following Interrogatories.

Art thou as cautious and circumspect in the whole Conduct of thy Life and Tenor of thy Conversation, as in this particular Point? Art thou as nice and scrupulous in thy Dealings and the essential Duties of Religion, particularly Justice and Mercy, as in Things of an indifferent Nature? Art thou of a modest, humble, charitable, and peaceable Temper; and as careful not to injure those of another Perswasion, by rash Censures and backbiting Reflections, as thou art not to offend a weak Brother, by a Ceremonial Observance? Hast thou done as much for the Peace of the Church, as thou woudst for an Office in the State; and conform'd in all those Instances, where thou art satisfy'd thou may'st do it with a safe Conscience? If thou art thus cautious and compliable, I shou'd gladly caress thee with all the Tenderness imaginable: But alas! where is the Man? I wish I had no Reason to fear, That I hug a Phantasm and embrace a Shadow. Good God! That ever there shou'd be such a Monster in the World call'd CONSCIENCE, which superstitiously strains at a Ceremony, and greedily swallows Schism and Disobedience at once, and lately Rebellion and Murther. I demand further, Hast thou any other Reasons for thy Non-compliance, than those which Education suggests and Interest inspires; which engag'd thee first in the Separation, and provoke thee to maintain it? Is it not to humour this or that Man or Party, on whom thou dependest for Trade, Custom, and a Livelihood, who oblige thee to give thy Vote, to strengthen an Interest on all publick Occasions? Indeed these Inducements are so mercenary and sordid, that thou dar'st not own them above-board: But be not deceiv'd, God is not mock'd, whose Eye penetrates the closest Recesses of the Breast. Or, is it Pride (which is the Mother and Nurse of most Vices) and a fond Conceit of thine own Abilities, or a Spirit of Obstinacy, or rather both,

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that hinder thy Compliance? Hast thou continued so long in a *Schismatick State*, that thou art now asham'd, or scorn'd to retract thy Opinion? I demand further, Dost thou not train up thy Children in a profane Contempt of the publick Worship and Service of the Church, which perhaps, when they come of Years, turn *Ranters and Atheists*? Is not thy Fancy tickled with the Drolleries and Satyrical Reflections of the *debauch'd Libellers* of the Age, (the *Tools of State-Dissenters, Whiggish Socinians, Arians and Deists*) who ridicule the Authority, Ministry and Usages of the *Church of England*; diverting themselves with the *Asbes* of the blessed Martyrs, whereon 'twas establish'd in this Kingdom; and, which is worse, with the *precious Blood* of the Son of God, wherewith 'twas purchased and seal'd. But further, can'st thou imagine that thy Teachers are *Men of Conscience and Integrity*, who in Print and Conversation declare, That they can safely comply in all the Instances of Lay-Communion; and yet set up distinct Churches in the Bowels of an orthodox and sound One lawfully establish'd; tearing it in pieces, seducing it's Members, and endeavouring to beget in them an *Opinion*, which they themselves renounce; in order to carry on the *Interest* of a Party, but especially their own *selfish Designs*; building their Fortunes on the Ruins of a Christian and Reformed Church. And indeed, I tremble to consider how strangely they have debauch'd the Consciences of many of their *Auditors*, who prostitute the *Holy Sacrament* (the most venerable Mystery of our Religion) to base and sinister Ends, viz. To qualify them for an Office of Power and Profit: "Which (*as one observes*) is so deliberate a Way of "sinning, even in the most solemn Act of Worship, that one would imagine, none shou'd be guilty of it, but Men of the most profligate and atheistical Minds. And yet they have the Face to tell us, That *Communion with, and Seperation from an Establish'd Church* (both Church and Persons continuing the same) *may very well consist with a good Conscience*; which all Divines abroad look on as a perfect Contradiction. But I shall take my Leave of *State-Dissenters*, whose *carnal Politicks* render 'em impenetrable to the keenest Arguments, and return to thee, if thou art a *well-meaning* One, and willing to be inform'd; and beseech thee, in the first Place, to shake off the *Prepossessions and Prejudices* of Education, and the *Tyranny* of thy Secular Leaders, whose Conduct thou hast so long and so blindly followed, and seriously to consider the following Particulars.

I. *The Nature of Religion*: Which does not consist in fruitless Speculations, or *Party Opinions*, in fancyful Amusements, or giddy Novelties, in Enthusiastick Heats, or fulsome Praises, in extempore Effusions, or long and noisy Addresses, in the Jingling of Words, or a melting Tone, in Wry Mouths, or Ejaculated Eyes, in Ceremonial Observances, or a Superstitious Abstinence; not in Forms or Fancies, Gestures or Habits, in *Meat or Drink*; no, but in *Righteousness, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost*; in an Orthodox Belief, and a Regular Conversation; in the Continual Exercise of a *Conscience void of Offence towards God and Man*: A Conscience that is neither abused by False Principles, nor overpowered by Vile Affections; that is neither misled by *Prejudice, Passion, or Interest*: A Conscience that neither renders us Secure and Confident in the

the *Wrong*, nor Upbraids us with any Hypocritical Prevarication, or Wilful Violation of the *Right*. And, in a Word, Religion consists in a sincere and diligent Pursuit of *Peace* and *Holiness*; without which, we are told, *No Man shall see the Lord*. Did but Men form a True Idea of God and Religion, they would not violate the most Important and Essential Duties of it, for Things of an Indifferent and Inferiour Nature. Whereas, Christian, thy Scruples and Practices plainly discover, that thou entertainest such mean and dishonourable Thoughts of the DEITY, as if he had a greater Regard to the *Dress* and *Circumstances* of Religion, than to the *Nature* of the *Duty*, and the *Disposition* of the *Mind* that performs it. As if He were so Humoursom a Being, as to reject the Prayers of a Devout Suppliant, because they are *printed* and read; or because He dislikes the *Garment* the Minister wears: Like a certain Hypochondriack Parent, whom I knew, that disinherited an ingenious and dutiful Child, because he did not like the Colour of his *Hair*. We acknowledge our Ceremonies to be Things Indifferent, and use them only out of Obedience to our Superiours, for outward Order and Decency: But the *scrupulous Dissenters* lay such a mighty Stress on them, as conscientiously to abstain from them as unlawful; and are afraid to swallow them lest the Devil and all his Works should crowd in after them. And if this be not *Superstition*, what is there that does deserve the Name of it?

II. Reflect often on the *Unity* of the Church, and the *Obligations* that all Baptiz'd Persons lie under, inviolably to preserve it. Consider seriously the Prayer of thy Dying Redeemer, *Joh. 17. 21. That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us, that the World may believe that thou hast sent me*. Which was to be a *Visible* Unity, that it might become an engaging Motive to Men to entertain the Christian Religion. But if his *Prayer* can't move thee, reflect on the *Agonies* of his Death, who shed the last Drop of his precious Blood, to cement and unite all the parts of this *Heavenly Building*. His Divine Soul took its leave of Flesh and Blood, to gather together into one, the Children of God that were scatter'd abroad, *John 11. 52*. And wilt thou do all that in thee lies, to defeat the *Efficacy* of his Prayer, and the *End* of his Death? How earnestly does *St. Paul* exhort the *Ephesians*, to keep the *Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*, *Ephes. 4. 3, 4, 5, 6*. Which Duty he enforces, by all the Arguments so Great an Apostle could possibly suggest and heap together. *There is one Body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in one Hope of your Calling: One Lord, one Faith, and one Baptism; one God and Father of all; who is above all, and thro' all, and in you all*. In which Words he plainly insinuates, That he that does not endeavor to keep the *Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*, does act repugantly to the Nature of Christianity, and cuts himself off from that glorious and necessary Unity which he here so fully explains. Art thou Baptized, and so made a visible Member of the Universal Church; and art thou not indispensably obliged to do the proper Office of a Member, and to contribute all thou can'st to the *Unity* and the *Strength* of the Whole Body? *If it be possible*, says the Apostle, *as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all Men*, *Rom. 12. 18*. And consequently with Societies of Men: And shall Peace be viola-

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ted in the Church (the Best of Societies) where it ought to be preserved most entire and inviolate; and that, by those that acknowledge it to be possible and lawful?

III. Consider the *Heinous Nature* and *Dreadful Consequences* of SCHISM, which is little considered by many, whom the Devil has inspired with that *Giddy Principle*, That 'tis left to every Man's Choice to Joyn with what Society of Christians he pleases: Which necessarily involves us in an absolute Confusion, and gives Birth to the Worst Errors and Evils, that a Church or State can be infested withal. Whereas, in the Opinion of the *ancient Non-conformists*, it was to be avoided and detested as *Adultery* or *Murther*. And indeed so it ought, if we consider, That 'tis no other than a *Crucifying the Son of God afresh*; by mangling and dividing a *sound and healthy* Part of that Body, whereof he hath graciously condescended to be the HEAD; cutting its Sinews, tearing its Bowels, and dissolving that Spirit of Love and Peace, which shou'd diffuse it self through it. Ah! how canst thou, without a trembling Horror, think on a SIN so *abominable* in its *Nature*, and as *fatal* in its *Consequences*; so *dishonourable* to thy Saviour and his Religion; so *destructive* to Church and State, and the Souls of Men? Good God! How can any, that have a *Spark* of *Zeal* for thine *Honour*, see these *Blots* and *Reproaches*, wherewith their *manifold Divisions* have *stain'd* the Beauty and Lustre of Christianity, without that tender Sympathy, which becomes the Breast of every Disciple of the Blessed Jesus? How can the *Dissenters* look on those *gashly Wounds*, which their *Seperation* has given the Church of Christ, and their dear Native Country, without a relenting Heart? How can they see the *best Constitution* in the World (which secures every thing that's *dear* to 'em) thus torn and shatter'd, without that Regret and Melancholly, which becomes every *sensible Member* of the Community? How can *Protestants* reflect on the many Advantages they've given the *Papists*, to re-establish their Idolatrous Worship in this Kingdom, without the smart and cutting Repartees of Conscience? Who stand ready to enter at these Breaches, which they are making, and to erect their Church on the Ruins of this: Hoping by these *Divisions*, to repair the Losses they've sustain'd by the *Reformation*. And indeed, the *Dissenters* have as *industriously* carried on the Design of the *Church of Rome*, as if they were *commissioned* by the *Tripple-Crown*, and were *inspired* by the *Conclave*. I shall conclude this Particular with a Supposition, That there might be a more agreeable Constitution, than the present is, invented; which *None* can tell, till it comes to be try'd; That there are some Things to be amended in our *Liturgy*, which Men of the greatest Penetration cannot yet discover; yet surely, To tear a Church in pieces; To condemn the Publick Worship of God; To violate the Bond of Peace and Brotherly Communion; To crumble into *Sects* and *Parties*; To live in perpetual Strife and Contention With one another; To disobey Lawful Governours, disturb the Peace of the Kingdom, and to expose our selves to the Common Enemy; is a far more *intollerable Evil* than any that can possibly be conceiv'd in our *Constitution*, or *Form of Worship*.

IV. Consider the *Obligations* thou liest under, to yield *ready Obedience* to the *Commands of Lawful Governours*, that are not *inconsistent* with the *Laws of GOD*: These being the *Vicegerents of the Universal Monarch of Heaven and Earth*; who has been pleas'd to impart a *Ray* of his *Authority* to *Man*, and whose *Image* consists in *Dominion*, as well as *Knowledge* and *Righteousness*. There is no *Duty* of a *Christian* more expressly and frequently commanded, or more forcibly inculcated, than *This of Obedience to the Higher Powers*; wherein the *Life* of our *Saviour*, as well as of his *Apostles*, was so *eminent* and *exemplary*. And indeed, Nothing is more *Repugnant* to the *Genius* and *Design* of *Christianity*, than the *Spirit of Contention*. *Disobedience*, as well as *Schism*, is as direct a *Contradiction* to the *Peaceableness*, as *Luxury* and *Epicurism* is to the *Purity*, of that *Wisdom which is from Above*. Nay, 'tis a *Vice* of a bigger *Size*, and deeper *Tincture*: For *Sensuality* constitutes us *Beasts*, but *Disobedience Devils*. He that does but read, without *Passion* and *Prejudice*, the *Seven first Verses* of the *13th Chapter* of *St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, cannot without equal *Violence* to the *Words* and his own *Conscience*, but meekly acquiesce in the *Doctrine* of *NON-RESISTANCE* and *PASSIVE OBEDIENCE*, as truly *Apostolical* and *Divine*.

V. Consider lastly, the *boundless Charity* of the *Church of England*; which, by the *Indulgence* it hath given to *Scrupulous Consciences*, shews, That 'tis of a *Temper* as far remote from the *Spirit of Persecution*, as of *Disloyalty*; whereof they themselves that most accuse her are the most *pregnant Proof*: The *Number* and *Riches* of the *Dissenters*, to which I must take *Leave* to add their *Confidence*, being the most undeniable *Argument* of the *unparalell'd Indulgence* of that *CHURCH* under whose *Government* they have grown up to this *Prodigious Heighth*. Whereas, the *Dissenters* (who formerly declar'd a *Toleration to be an appointing a City of Refuge in Mens Consciences for the Devil to fly to, and a Toleration of Soul-Murther, the greatest of all others*) are of a quite different *Principle* and *Kidney*; whereof *Scotland* and *New-England* are a sufficient *Evidence*: And, Ah! I wish I could not say, *Old England* too, to the *Eternal Reproach* of our *Nation*, and the *Reform'd Religion* in it. Now I cannot but persuade my self, That a serious and frequent *Reflection* on these *Things*, would banish the very *Names* of *Superstition* and *Schism*, *Faction* and *Rebellion*; and revive the *Spirit*, *Unity* and *Obedience* of the *Primitive Church*, and make us a *happy* and *flourishing People*. I shall conclude with that *Pathetick Exhortation* of the *Apostle*, big with all the *Engaging Charms*, and *Mutual Endearments*, that the *Religion* of the *Blessed Jesus* can afford: *If there be therefore any Consolation in Christ, if any Comfort of Love, if any Fellowship of the Spirit, if any Bowels and Mercies; fulfil ye my Joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same Love, being of One Accord, of One Mind*, Phil. 1. 1, 2.

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